

Explain the role played by the supernatural in macbeth essay

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The play begins with a supernatural scene, where the three witches meet and give many clues as to who they are or what they have control over, "... We three meet again in thunder, lighting or in rain? When the battle's lost and won.... That will be ere the set of sun.... There to meet with Macbeth.

" This scene sets the atmosphere for the rest of the play. If this scene was not there it would be difficult for the audience to understand how later scenes are linked or how these three women can tell Macbeth's future. Also if elements of the supernatural were not used in Act 1 Scene 1, as they have been, the witches could not be shown as sinister and evil. These two elements of horror, " sinister" and " evil" would later be used to explain the cause of the three witches' behaviour further on in the play. As the play continues the supernatural is used more.

Act 1 Scene 3 is Macbeth's first meeting with the witches, and is also the first time the audience sees or experiences the witches' supernatural abilities. " All hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor, All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter". The witches predict Macbeth's future and tell him that he shall become the Thane of Cawdor and then king. The rest of the play is based on this supernatural happening. After learning that Macbeth is to become King of Scotland the play follows Macbeth's plot to get rid of King Duncan and then Macbeth's life after the murder. Macbeth is now Thane of Cawdor and has a strong belief in the witches' predictions.

King Duncan is to stay at Macbeth's castle. Macbeth is overwhelmed to hear this and travels ahead of the King to warn his wife of King Duncan's arrival the following day. Lady Macbeth is aware of Macbeth's meeting with the

witches and what they have said. She is more wanting of the royal title than her husband, and has deviously plotted to murder the King during his stay.

Again the supernatural is brought in to once again attract the immediate attention of the audience. "Is this a dagger I see before me", Macbeth has a vision of a dagger just before he is to murder the King. This surreal vision of the dagger is another example of the supernatural. This dagger encourages or "pushes" Macbeth to commit the crime. Although it is meant to encourage Macbeth to do the murder, it is at the same time, showing the audience that what Macbeth is about to do, although it being obvious, is evil.

Shakespeare uses the supernatural to guide the audience to show what evil is. You begin to notice, as you read through the play, that supernatural is used in all places where evil is present. Macbeth is now the King of Scotland since both of Duncan's sons have fled the country in fear of their lives.

The only obstacle in Macbeth's path now is his close friend Banquo, because Banquo suspects Macbeth of Duncan's murder since he was also present when the witches told of Macbeth's Kingship, "...I fear, thou play'st most foully for't". Banquo tells Macbeth that he suspects him of the King's murder, "...Thou play'st foully for't", Banquo is clearly suggesting that Macbeth has played foully to achieve his Kingship. Also, it is not only Macbeth who was given this, "supernatural soliciting".

The witches also predicted Banquo's future, "Thou shalt get Kings, though thou be none" Banquo is told that he will not become a King but he shall be the father of many Kings. This is a problem for Macbeth because the only

way Banquo's children will become Kings is if the present King, Macbeth, dies and so Macbeth fears being murdered and being discovered to have murdered King Duncan. So he has Banquo murdered and on the same night invites him to a feast.

Macbeth obviously does not expect Banquo to attend, but Banquo does attend as a ghost, and through the supernatural Shakespeare shows Macbeth's fear and guilt. The King, Macbeth, is about to sit down at his table with his wife and some nobles when he sees no space for himself, although there is, but according to him a figure seems to be already sitting there, which we later discover is the ghost of Banquo. Macbeth declares, "What treachery is this, which of you have done this", his fellows are confused and some are apprehensive and begin to link King Duncan's death with Macbeth. But none speak of what they think instead they try to calm the maddened king. After this supernatural occurrence some, more strongly, believe that Macbeth had a hand in the King's murder. This supernatural happening is very important, since it is one of the first signs of Macbeth's fear and guilt. This scene was designed with great subtlety to make Shakespeare's audience spit on Macbeth's face when he began to fear for himself, even after committing the murder of a king and having his closest companion murdered.

Beyond this scene the play becomes more sinister and the atmosphere transforms into cold, darkness and raging evil. Macbeth goes to the moor to meet the witches where he makes them promise to answer his questions and they conjure up supernatural apparitions to answer him. At first these

apparitions seem to be on Macbeth's side and do not alarm him in any way and when told by the witches, "None of women born shall harm Macbeth", he feels more confident. As he thinks more about the apparitions he feels there is something darker about them. Shakespeare uses the supernatural apparition to show the audience that evil is present. These supernatural apparitions are as important as the earlier predictions made by the witches since they display several characteristics which Macbeth has obtained during his first meeting with the witches and now. This scene shows how Macbeth no longer follows his own instincts but instead relies completely on the supernatural.

These apparitions are one of the reasons for Macbeth's end. He relied on the supernatural so much that he lost his strength of suspicion, this leads Macbeth into being tricked by the witches. When he is told, "None of women born shall harm Macbeth", he becomes over confident and does not fear nor is careful of anyone. When Macbeth meets Macduff at his end he is not scared and threatens Macduff not to fight him since he has too much of Macduff's family blood on his sword already. Macbeth is suggesting that he can kill Macduff if he wants to. The apparitions are also important in the fact that Shakespeare expresses his view that the supernatural is evil, and can trick even the strongest of people. This is the last meeting between Macbeth and the witches before the play ends and also the last times any supernatural things occur. The scene also displays the witches' supernatural abilities and contributes towards Macbeth's increasing fear of death, because

the apparitions contradict themselves by saying, "Beware of Macduff" and "None of women born shall harm Macbeth".

Macbeth does not understand that he is being tricked by the fact that Macduff was born premature or by caesarean section, it is not clear which one, but by being born that way he is not of, "woman born", therefore it is possible that Macduff could harm Macbeth. The contradiction in the apparitions makes Macbeth double minded, unsure and scared. Though eventually, with great apprehension, he manages to convince himself that not even Macduff can harm him. Macbeth, as well as the audience, at this point, is unclear as to what the third apparition means. The apparition involves a child holding a tree and is crowned. Macbeth ignores it, but still fears death and his kingship is becoming strained and confusing for both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Although Lady Macbeth seems to have a stronger mental character at the start of the play, she is now suffering from remorse and confusion.

She feels, "Tis safer to be that which we destroy than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy". Lady Macbeth describes the supernatural as her, "destruction", and she refers to her royalty and wealth as, "doubtful joy", this quote from Lady Macbeth shows how even the most desperate of people regret relying on the supernatural. At the beginning of Act 5 Scene 1 Macbeth is informed of Lady Macbeth's death. Macbeth shows no emotion or extra stress, this suggests that he doesn't really care. This scene, though it is not directly linked with the supernatural, shows how selfish Macbeth has become due to it. Macbeth has knowledge of Malcolm's army moving in to

attack his castle and has ordered his army also to attack. Shakespeare finishes the play very dramatically with Macbeth being Slain by Macduff, and Malcom being crowned the rightful King of Scotland. This is the third and final apparition, which was given to Macbeth by the witches.

This apparition has also come true. The little child with a crown on his head in the apparition is meant to be Malcolm once he has been crowned the rightful King of Scotland. The significance of the tree which was held by the child in the apparition is, " Great Birnam Wood", where Malcolm hid his army in the days following up to the final battle. At the start of the play Macbeth is portrayed as a tactful and intelligent soldier but in his final battle he uses none of these skills. The reason for this is that the evil supernatural has made Macbeth lose these Virtues. The supernatural theme is a very important one in, " Macbeth".

Otherwise the play could not have been concluded to its fullest extent, and Macbeth could not be vanquished as ironically as he was when, Great Birnam Wood moved! Macbeth caused his own destruction when he relied on the supernatural. As the play follows a man to his complete destruction and loss of integrity the supernatural is very crucial as it is the reason behind, Macbeth, this man's destruction.